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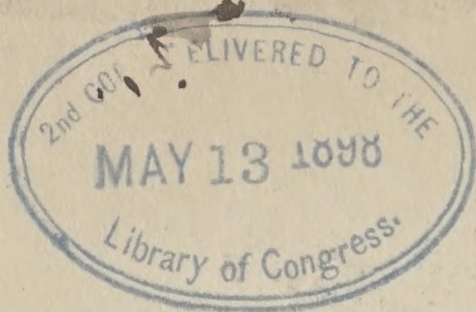
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By

Mary Hartwell Catherwood

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“HE BROUGHT OUT AN OBJECT UPON WHICH SHE GAZED
WITH CURIOSITY.”

(See page 20.)

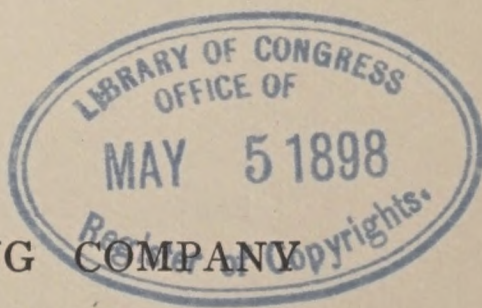
BONY AND BAN

THE STORY OF A PRINTING VENTURE

BY
MARY HARTWELL CATHERWOOD
AUTHOR OF
"THE ROMANCE OF DOLLARD," "ROCKY
FORK," "THE DOGBERRY BUNCH,"
ETC., ETC.

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BONY AND BAN

BONY AND BAN.

CHAPTER I.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

A DOZEN years ago, Granville might have been called the village of churches and schools and beautiful seclusion. It has a railroad now, but the railroad runs at its feet in the valley below. The town is on a terrace so downy and lovely that the bare ribs of Quarry Hill make it none the less attractive. From its main street the student ascends the Hill of Science to what is known as Denison University. At the eastern and western ends are Young Ladies' Seminaries, that yearly swarm with girls from various States, who brighten the half dozen stores on shopping Saturdays, and for constitutionals climb Sugar Loaf's cone,

towards the sunset, or pant up Mt. Parnassus's huge shoulder on the east. Or, by favor, they extend their walk, in processions, with a teacher at the head, to that relic of the mound-builders, a mile on the Newark road, Alligator Hill, where a gravel-colored reptile stands distinctly up from summer greenness. Or they pass the valley southward and climb Flower-pot, where arbutus may be found in spring. I do not know positively of another spot in Ohio where arbutus grows. Perhaps it sprung there in compliment to this Massachusetts colony, who settled among the gentle hills, and built log churches until they could afford the many structures which now occupy prominent places.

All the farms around Granville are rich and fair to look at. The air is much purer there than you find it southward, about the foggy flats. The old colonist families have beautiful homes and a great respect for culture. They go abroad, and have noted people to visit them. They keep the Sabbath zealously; base things do not flourish there. They are proud of their village; and in the whole county a certain de-

gree of deference is accorded to a Granville dweller; he must smack of learning when he lives in such a sea of it; he hears all the graduating exercises, and is invited to college concerts; what are advantages in the great world, compared to these? A blessing long ago fell upon the place. I can see the sloping corn fields surrounding it, and the afternoon sun, lying like a benediction on the glistening buildings. It has a stimulating atmosphere. The plainest and poorest man finds means to give his children an education, and the washerwoman's daughter reads her graduating essay with equal honors beside the governor's. Yet no fair spot can be without blemishes; and every home in Granville was not a lovely nursery of children growing up to honor the State.

On an early summer afternoon two ladies were passing by an old house in that part of the village which sloped towards the valley. One of them was a resident, the other a schoolmate, married and settled on the Pacific coast, but returned for a brief visit. Together they had been looking at all the old landmarks, regret-

ting that private fences were venturing up the slope of Sugar Loaf, and talking of the merry girls of their long-dispersed class.

"What became of Lucy Allbright, who married Tom Lemon just after we graduated?" inquired the visitor.

"Oh! didn't you know she died years ago?"

"So she did! I heard it, but it's hard to believe such things. She was such a nice girl."

"There are her children," said the resident, lowering her voice as she nodded to a boy and girl talking across the fence. The boy stood outside; the girl, a year or two his senior, sat upon the flat fence-top sidewise, leaning towards him. Their motherless, neglected condition was too apparent.

"Lucy's children," murmured the other lady. "Where is their father?"

"Nobody knows. She made a dreadful match, poor girl."

"But everybody used to prophesy great things of Tom Lemon. He was so talented. He was studying law, when I went away, and intending to seek larger fields."

"Tom turned out very badly. He drank until he ruined himself, and then deserted her before the second child was born. She died in a little while. That's the story that came back to us. They lived West. The children were sent to Cornelius Allbright."

"Is he kind to them?"

"He's very queer. But he will not allow any one to interfere with him. The boy has been put out to work at a boarding-house, but the girl stays alone with her uncle. I have often thought it must be an unpleasant life the child leads with that bachelor. He has not been quite himself for a good many years. But he has means, and can take care of the children."

The ladies' voices turned a corner, scarcely heeded by Bony and Ban. Bony was barefooted, and wore a straw hat and very shabby trousers and jacket. His unbleached shirt was soiled at the cuffs. He had large, living hazel eyes, and a forehead white and high and bulging so at the top that his rings of hair hung like bushes over an inward-slanting cliff. Ban was very black-eyed, very brown and warm-

colored. She looked a little like a pomegranate, for she wore a yellow calico dress.

"I'll be along about dusk," said Bony, concluding their conversation.

"I'll go, if uncle 'Nelus'll let me," said Ban.

"You'll find me up by Bancroft's corner," said Bony.

"Yes; when the town clock's going on seven," said Ban.

So Bony trotted along on his errand, and Ban dismounted from the fence and went into the house.

Uncle 'Nelus always resented the sight of Bony. Had he been present, this conference between brother and sister must have taken place over the back-yard fence, or around the corner. The house interior was very formal and depressing. A house that is not repaired, and has no addition made to its furnishing in three generations, is apt to be so. Uncle 'Nelus had neither housekeeper nor servant. He and Ban picnicked there; Mrs. Morris, a motherly Welshwoman, did their washing, and uncle 'Nelus caring nothing about his linen,

the little girl ironed it, with indifferent success. Neighboring mothers tried to be kind to her; but their interference was strictly discouraged. They claimed that 'Nelus Allbright had little but bread and cheese in his cupboard; yet Ban had grown to be thirteen on this diet, and, though she was small, she was not a meagre child.

There were echoing rooms up-stairs and echoing rooms down-stairs. Yet the house was not lonesome on summer afternoons, with carpenter sounds outdoors, the voices of children in the air, and the breathing of the wind along the valley; as it was on short winter days, which all tended to gloomy nights, when the windows shook, and everybody else was housed close. Ban went to school fitfully; there were days during which uncle 'Nelus would not spare her from the house at all; he sat at home with pains in his limbs, and required much nursing. She always prepared his dinner at noon. When he was in good health he walked the streets, leaning on a heavy stick, or sat silently at the largest grocer's, watching with a stern eye every

purchase that was made. Ban's progress at school was curbed by the refusal of her uncle to buy books for her. Such ancient works as were in the house she might make use of; but entreaties brought no others.

The uneven floor in the living-room creaked under Ban's feet as she trod. The ends of some boards made bumps in the carpet, while at other places the foot sunk, betrayed into grooves. The homespun carpet, made by Ban's grandmother, smelled musty. On rainy days discolored spots came on all the ceilings, and would grow thick in the cellar.

This being a clear and sunshiny day, the air came across roses to Ban's nostrils, as she pinned her sewing to her knee and stitched in the living-room. There was a high black mantel behind her, and bare walls about her. Ban was an old little woman who made her own clothing, and patched for Bony as much as she could. Neighboring mothers tried to give her instructions, but it need hardly be said she was a funny figure. Uncle 'Nelus objected to buying anything but calico dresses for her, and these at

rare intervals. In summer her wrap was a lace cape, which had belonged to her mother; in winter a black wadded cloak, bleached gray by many rains, had been her defence against cold ever since she could remember. It made Ban's head spin to see other girls of her age blossom so frequently into new clothes.

Dreary as her experience was, she felt sure if Bony could only live with her she would be a happy girl. Uncle 'Nelus never met Bony without raising up the staff he carried as if about to strike him. Bony always looked him in the eyes without flinching. After every such encounter the boy shook his head at the thought of Ban's remaining with her uncle, though the latter never lifted his staff at Ban. She resembled her mother, while Bony was growing more and more like his father.

When the town clock struck five, Ban put down her sewing, and went into the kitchen to set out the supper. She took from the kitchen cupboard some cold rice and a plate of melted butter, and set them on the dining-room table. Besides the table, in this room,

there were some chairs, which she kept set straight against the wall, and a mahogany-cased clock on a shelf. The wall-paper was peeling in places, and an enormous square of bare lath showed in the ceiling. Ban's own room was over this apartment, and she often heard bits of plaster fall in the night, especially after rain.

There was no tea to make. Nor did they take milk of the milkman. She pumped a pitcher full of water, and went into the weedy garden for radishes. These tubers came up huge and pithy, but she washed, and sliced them upon a plate. There was a grape-vine over one side of the house; the grapes were not yet ripe, and, when ripe, half of them were burrowed by worms.

Uncle 'Nelus came into the house, groping slowly with his stick. His neck appeared to grow out of his breast, so stooped was he. He was cold even in summer days, and wore a black woollen shawl around his shoulders, unless the weather oppressed him. A general grayness and sourness made his face a painful sight. He put his hat and shawl upon a nail,

and sat down at the table before Ban called him. She was picking a handful of prairie-roses, intending to put them in a cup on the table, but gathered them in the skirt of her dress when she saw uncle 'Nelus at table.

Sitting opposite him, with the roses in her lap, she waited until he drank his water and munched his bread and rice before asking:

"May I go up Science Hill this evening, uncle?"

"What's there?" inquired uncle 'Nelus. His voice was always a growl.

"I want to take a walk."

"Don't you walk enough, going to school and back?"

"It's such a nice evening, I would like to go up on Science Hill."

"Girls have no business to gad," said uncle 'Nelus. "They better stay home and sew."

"I have sewed. I got my new apron most made. It's out o' mother's old lawn dress."

"Last night it was Parnassus," munched uncle 'Nelus, with his radish, "and now it's Science Hill."

"The Lower Sem girls were on Parnassus, last evening. Some of them looked so pretty. I sat off a good piece and watched them. How much they must know! O uncle! how I wish I could go to the Sem some day!"

Uncle 'Nelus growled, as if the pains were coming back in his legs. He said girls learned folly enough, without going where such a price was paid for it. He also said it was a wonder her food did not choke her; people should eat in silence.

Ban promised to eat in silence if she might go on Science Hill, and her uncle gave his negative consent by remarking if she failed to be indoors at nine o'clock she would be locked out.

With more delightful anticipations than many children bring to great festivities, the little girl swallowed her rice and bread, and cleared the supper away.

Uncle 'Nelus walked aimlessly around the yard with his arms behind him. Now he stooped and examined this spot and now that. A neighbor, who passed by and gave him good-

evening without getting any answer, said to the next neighbor, who sat outside in the pleasant evening air:

“ ‘Nelus Allbright gets queerer every day. I wouldn’t be surprised if his mind entirely broke down.”

The next neighbor replied that he had always been queer, but his sister’s death affected him more than anything else. The only change the next neighbor saw in him was his increasing miserliness.

Ban, without the dignity of the lace cape and the openwork straw hat lined with pink paper, worn by her mother before her, topped only by her ancient Shaker bonnet, scudded off to Bancroft’s corner when Sugar Loaf was throwing the town into shadow. Bony was waiting. It is probable uncle ‘Nelus knew he was waiting, though he would not hear the boy’s name mentioned. They walked sedately until the ascent began, when they tugged up the steep path like sturdy ponies, Bony pulling Ban. Students passed them who were probably marvels of learning, and they crossed the

stile and the College Campus with a feeling of awe.

"Why did you hide it away up here?" whispered Ban, mysteriously, as they approached the College Cemetery, a fair, wooded spot where homeless students and professors were buried.

"I didn't know where to put it," said Bony, "and this is the last place anybody would look."

The afterglow of sunset threw a transparent green shadow around them; even the college pile and its attendant buildings were hidden by the woods. Bony made a turn around an oak-tree with a cavity in its side. He looked impressively at Ban. Then he plunged his arms in, and brought out an object, upon which she gazed with curiosity.

"What is it, Bony?"

"It's a little printing-press. When I learn to set type fast I can print anything I please."

"Where did you get it?"

"I swapped for it!"

Blanche looked her brother over; he was not a boy with superfluities for swapping.

"I got it of young Munson," he explained.

"His father gave it to him for a birthday present. But he rather have my father's big law-book."

"O Bony! did you trade that off?"

"Yes," owned Bony, rather shamefaced.

"It was worth lots more than your baby printin'-press." Ban viewed it as a precious bit of wreck, cast up with them from that half-remembered ship of home that foundered so early. When uncle 'Nelus sent Bony out of the house, he took the book among his clothes; Ban considered it his heirloom.

"But what could I do with the old book?" urged the boy in defence.

"You could have kept it to learn, when you are bigger."

"I ain't a lawyer, and I don't want to be one. Now, I can do something with the press. I can be a printer right off. I can make programmes. When the College and the Seminaries give entertainments they send to Newark to get their printin' done. Why can't I do it?"

Ban unclosed her lips and tilted her head one side, to consider this little barefooted speculator.

He was a dear brother; but how dared he undertake such mighty things? "Will they let you?" whispered Ban.

"Well, I'll see if they won't. There isn't any paper printed in this town, or any printin'-house. I'm 'leven years old, and in ten more I'll be twenty-one. What'll we come to, if I don't make up my mind to do somethin'!"

Ban felt the stir of a mind more daring than her own. She looked through the dim woods, and said with a sigh:

"O Bony! I wish father would come back."

Bony dropped his head. Uncle 'Nelus could not object to the mention of father more than Bony did.

Ban hastened on to projects of her own.

"When we get big, let's keep house and board the students."

Napoleon sniffed. "'Most everybody in town does that. I'll learn how to print newspapers, and you can live at my house."

"Sometime I might grow to be a teacher in one of the seminaries," mused Ban, in beatitude, "and know everything; and walk out at the

head of all the girls. Yesterday, there was a little, teenty girl walking among the grown-up ones; how very smart she must be!"

"I wish I had some nice place to keep it," said Bony. "I hate to leave it here over one night."

"There's so many empty rooms at home," said Ban. But of what use were they to a boy banished from the premises?

They searched each other's eyes, wherein leaved and dusky tree-boles were reflected. To take his press to the boarding-house where he was employed, would be taking it to its destruction.

"Mr. Mantonya's old house on the side of Parnassus," suggested Ban. "I believe he'd let you keep it there."

"Yes!" assented Bony. "The boys won't run through there. His blacksmith shop's so near he can watch. Since they've moved into their new house they only use the lower part."

Bony covered up his property again, and the children came slowly out of the Campus woods. A purple dusk had settled in the valley. They

sat down for awhile in the dewy hollow of Quarry Hill, prolonging their Saturday evening. The town clock's huge face, staring from the Baptist church tower, confronted them, and its iron minute-hand pointed ten minutes of nine. When Ban saw this, she rose to fly down the heights.

"O Bony! I'll be locked out if we stop here at all! I know uncle 'Nelus is coming in from the barn, now, to 'tend to the door-fastenings!"

They took hold of hands and let themselves down-hill in a cautious trot. Bony accompanied Ban near the home fence. They exchanged a good-night kiss. He scudded towards his employer's, and she slipped in at the side door while uncle 'Nelus was locking the kitchen.

"I'm here," called Ban.

"Get to bed, get to bed," the old uncle muttered.

The little girl ran towards the stairs, but came back, feeling an unusually strong impulse. She had often tried the feat before, most unsuccessfully. Uncle 'Nelus came through the sitting-room, shorn of his shawl and coat, a

gray-bearded, fearful-looking figure. But Ban stood on tiptoe and puckered her lips invitingly at his elbow.

“Good-night, uncle.”

“Get to bed,” said uncle 'Nelus. He did lean over and allow her lips to graze his ear.

“I must give you another, from Bony,” said Ban, thus encouraged.

But her terrible uncle 'Nelus, instead of submitting his ear to another from Bony, took her ear between his thumb and finger, led her to the foot of the stairway, and dismissed her with a tweak.

Ban looked out of her own curtainless window while unhooking her dress. Her heart was swelled and crowded into her throat. After unhooking her dress, she squeezed her throat to push the lump down. After this she laughed. Uncle 'Nelus was a very funny man. If father had never gone off would he have acted like uncle 'Nelus?

“Come back, father!” Ban exclaimed. “Oh! do come back to your children!”

When the uproarious family in which he was

a drudge, retired, very near the beginning of Sunday, Bony lay awake, thinking. The air was feverish, and his roommates, sons of the house, of various sizes, tired by their day of hard play, snored in various keys around him. Young Munson had shown him how to set the types and operate his press; and he was going over the process in his mind.

In Granville, people who attended neither church nor Sunday school were in a small minority. It was no day of rest at this boarding-house, but about half-past eleven o'clock Bony could be spared, and he made himself clean, and put on his "other" trousers and little linen coat, and walked forth, sweet and wholesome, though his bare feet would make no noise on the church matting. Bony liked to go to Sunday school; he felt in good society. He liked the gentlemanly presence of his teacher. His teacher was a college junior, destined to be a theological student afterwards. After the noon Sunday school, this young gentleman was hurrying off to his luncheon,—people in Granville took a Sunday luncheon at one o'clock,

and dinner at five, to brace them for the evening service, — when he noticed the boy trying to keep pace with him.

“Going my way, Bony?” he inquired, kindly.

“No, sir! I just came up to ask when the Calliopes are going to give their next entertainment, — or the Franks, either.”

“You aren’t partial to one society, then?”

“I like them both. But if I was in college I’d be a Calliope.”

“Thanks! So would I.”

“Are you president now?”

“Only chaplain. Why do you want to know about entertainments?”

“I want,” said Bony, seriously, “to get a chance to do your printin’.”

“Printing?”

“I want to print your programmes for you. I b’lieve I can do it cheaper and as good as they do in Newark. Then I’m always handy, in a hurry, you know.”

“That’s enterprise,” said Mr. Junior, without smiling. “What do you print with — your fingers?”

“I’ve bought a little press. If you’ll just give me something of yours to set up, I’ll show you how I do it.”

“Well,” said his teacher, slowly, “there is no public entertainment immediately pending, in either society.” Bony admired such sonorous English, but he felt anxious. “We have open society, as usual, next Thursday evening. I tell you what we can do. Here is a poem of mine which you may print as a specimen. I’ll show your specimen in the business meeting, and the society will decide upon it.”

Mr. Mantonya’s old house, on the side of Parnassus, stood just above his new one; and a few apple-trees stood just above it, sticking their boughs higher than the eaves. Parnassus was as abrupt in ascent as an elephant’s sides. The lower floor of the old house was used as a family storeroom. In the east upper room, Ban joined Bony on Wednesday evening. It had taken him a couple of evenings to negotiate with the blacksmith for these secluded quarters, and carry his press down from the Campus hol-

low tree. A kerosene lamp, lent by Mrs. Mantonya, shed light on his labors. They were both very quiet. The blacksmith had stipulated no strange boys should be attracted, to gallop over his premises. And typesetting was new and fascinating to Bony; his eyes shone, and his white bumps stood prominent. It was a naked, dusty room. Ban sat on a barrel, munching some parched corn a girl had given her at school. There was a body and flavor to the sweet, brown-buttered kernels never to be found in more aristocratic pop-corn. It was stuff all out of fashion; a relic of the State's log-cabin days. Yet she who carried a pocketful of it to school smelled its incense with delight, and also the incense of popular favor for the time. Ban had not dared to offer Bony his equal share while he worked with his sleeves up. She piled it on a paper ready for him, and tried not to crackle her own grains loudly.

When at last the typesetting was done, and Napoleon paused, Ban called his attention to the corn, and took occasion to inquire

why he had his shirt-sleeves rolled above his elbows.

"'Cause," said Bony, munching, "I've seen pictures of Benjamin Franklin when he was a printer, and he had his shirt-sleeves rolled up."

"Are you a printer?"

"Going to be one."

"But Benjamin Franklin had long curly hair, too."

"I don't mind about the hair, but I want my hands to look like business."

"Is the printing done now, Bony?"

"No. It's just ready to do. "I've got my copy set up."

"What's copy?"

"The thing you are going to print. This is my teacher's poetry."

It was, in fact, a fragment of a poem, which the Junior, who enjoyed the reputation of poet of his class, intended to immerse in an effort of bolder metre.

"Could you read it to me?" inquired Ban, with Granvillian respect for art.

Bony straightened himself, and read:

“A small green fist beneath the mold
Lay passive through the winter weather :
Nothing was clasped within its hold.
— The heat came down and made it bold :
Its knuckles pushed out altogether.

“The small green fist lay on the mold,
Though underneath a dead leaf’s cover :
Its blood was stirred and upward rolled —
Slowly the fist and palm unfold
To feel more leaves about it hover.

“Stand off, dead leaf ! the waving ferns
Now spread their hands in constant blessing :
They shake off sun and dew by turns :
On them the summer never burns.
But green, and daintily caressing,

“Their touch my heated pulses calms
And silent sermons to me preaches :
They are our Mother Earth’s fine palms
All fragrant with her hidden balms,
Which to her children she upreaches.”

“Well, that’s toler’ble pretty,” remarked Ban,
impressed by Bony’s reading. “Ferns are
awful sweet!”

"I got in all the punctuation marks, I know," said Bony, laying down the copy and lifting his ink-roller. "Banny, I tell you what I've made up my mind to do."

Blanche listened for the revelation.

"I'm going to print a little newspaper."

"Oh, no!" said Blanche, "you can't."

"Oh, yes, I can! I'm going to make it," said Bony, laying down his roller and taking a square off his thin stack of printing-paper, "the size of this: four pages; one page full of advertisements. And have it ready on Saturday mornings when the Seminary girls go shopping. I'll print talk about people in it, and everybody will want to buy it. A cent a copy."

"O Bony!" breathed Ban, whose view of this undertaking was from the ridiculous side, "you're too little. Folks will laugh. Why, I'd laugh! And it would make me mad to hear any one make fun!"

"Let 'em make fun," said Bony, with a serious and visionary countenance. "I can't stop from trying things 'cause I'll be laughed at. I've picked out some things to put in my paper."

And set some items down. I guess they call'm items. There's never been a paper printed in Granville. We need one," observed Bony, sagely.

He inked his types and printed off his first proof. His forehead seemed to tie itself into a small bow-knot above his nose.

"How it looks!" he cried, scornfully.

Some of the letters stood on their heads; some words galloped right into others, and the whole was blurred.

"I'll have to fix it," observed Bony, sturdily. So he inked himself high up his hands in the effort, and after awhile was ready to take off another proof. The printing was right, but the proof showed a mere blur. He inked his types heavily, and took off a black mass.

"O Bony!" exclaimed his sister.

The little fellow stood silent.

He tried again and again. It seemed impossible to get a clean, sharply printed page.

"I don't b'lieve this type's worth anything!"

"O Bony!"

"Or I don't understand how to use it."

"What'll you do?" inquired Ban, after a dreadful pause.

Where was his little newspaper now? Where the programme printing — or even the specimen poem he was to show the very next evening?

"I'm goin' to Newark — to-night," said Bony.

This was a more desperate leap than planning a newspaper. Ban very nearly breathed in a grain of corn, in her gasp.

"I wanted to take the Granville printin' from their offices, and I don't know whether they'll show me or not. But I'll see. I've got to find out how the thing is done before to-morrow."

"How long will you stay?" pleaded Ban. This expedition was as terrible in her eyes as a pirate's cruise upon the high seas. But who could stop Bony?

He looked up, with the perspiration beading upon his forehead.

"Oh! I'm not going to be a fizzle. I'll have to be back in time to make the breakfast fire. About half-past five o'clock."

"But the 'bus don't go till morning."

"What do I want of a 'bus! I'm goin' to

walk it. It's only seven miles. They'll be at work on the morning paper by the time I get there. That's what I want to see."

"Oh! how'll you get back?"

"Same way. Foot it. So I'm back by morning they won't care down at the boarding-house. Their young ones are always out playing 'round till midnight."

The children looked at each other, realizing how light were the family cords which bound them to any spot. Nobody would care where Bony was, if he appeared in time to be useful.

"Well," said Ban, "I'll go with you."

"No, Miss Posey. I'll have to run lots of the way. And you couldn't go all over a printin'-house at midnight. I wouldn't allow you to!" said Bony, protectingly.

"H'm! you're younger than I am," exclaimed Ban. "And you'll go off in the dark and get hurt! Besides I've forgot the time, and it must be after nine o'clock now, and uncle 'Nelus'll punish me, and I might as well do something big to be punished for."

"This jaunt wouldn't do for you," said Bony,

solemnly. "You can't go." When Ban found her pleas were in vain, she refused to let him waste time in going home with her.

"I can run as fast as you!" she whispered, looking towards that dark curve where the broad main street swept around the hill-foot eastward.

"Not another word," said Bony. "I don't want you to get into trouble; if I do I can stand it." And so he cantered off into the night.

CHAPTER II.

BONY HAS ADVENTURES.

WILLOW POND disappeared behind Bony. Alligator Hill was at his left hand, its clay reptile discernible; then he left it in the rear. He ran in a long lope for perhaps half a mile further. Then he slacked to a quick walk; his small bare feet, with their toes towards Newark, making their mark in the cool dust. Dust with sunshine sifted through it is different in feeling from dust half chilled with dew. Bony passed gates of ornamental stone which gave entrance to villas set back on rolling slopes. He passed farmhouses, and dogs came out to bark at him, and he shied stones at them as he hurried on. Sometimes the road cleft through hills, and once it descended to Jarrett's Branch, which, rolling up his trousers, he carefully waded. It dug its way around the waist of a hill, and in this curve Bony came very near being run over

by a party of young men, who were lashing their horses around it at great speed.

Every little while he took a run; then walked with long steps until he recovered his breath, and ran again. The miles decreased. He saw the glare of Newark's gas, away off in the east; cottages multiplied, bakeries and groceries sprang up. He was walking in what seemed a long village street, and it led him past a Catholic church, past residences growing closer and more pretentious, until one more turn brought him past the market-house and in sight of the court-house square.

Near the canal, in the end of a five-story block, and in the third and fourth rows of windows, blazed the lights of the newspaper which Bony was seeking. He could see men busy setting types.

A long dark gap with stairs rising from the very sidewalk gave entrance to the building. He plunged boldly up, his heart beating great thuds. On the next floor, where a jet of gas illuminated a narrow passage, he found a painted hand on the wall, indicating that he should

double on his course and mount another flight of steps. Neither stairs nor floor were clean. His naked toes recoiled from apple-cores and cigar-stumps. A hum greeted him before he reached the next floor; when his eyes rose to a level with it, he saw only a long passage like the one below, lighted by a jet or two. But on the first door at the top of the staircase was a large yellow placard with "Editor's Room" printed in swollen letters upon it. Bony thought the way to reach the information he wanted must be through the editor's room.

He knocked on a panel of the door, but nobody appeared to notice it. In fact, the presses overhead were making a great noise. Presently an inky, barearmed man, with a handful of paper, came down from the upper floor and almost ran upon Bony. This man stared at him, and went in, shutting the door behind him. Almost instantly a young man came leaping up the lower stairs, humming a tune. He, too, opened the door of the editor's room and went straight in.

"Maybe they don't knock," thought the boy.

So he turned the knob for himself and walked into the first of a series of rooms. Nobody was there, but he heard voices, and followed them.

In the next room several gentlemen were talking; the young man who ran up-stairs was already down at a desk, scribbling with all his might, and the printer who brought copy was waiting for what he wrote.

Bony was such a little creature on silent feet that they did not notice him. He pulled off his straw hat. A clock showed him that it was now eleven; he had no time to stand around and tremble.

"Mister!" said he, quaveringly, addressing the whole collection of men.

"Something of that sort, with a tincture of sarcasm," the head editor was saying, when this treble smote his ear. He turned his bald head and spectacles, as they all turned, and seeing Bony, said, sharply:

"Eh? what do you want?"

"Mother been whipped?" "Runaway?" "Police news?" cheerfully inquired the sub-editors.

The boy looked from one to another, and went straight to his errand.

"I want to learn to print."

"Oh, you do," said the chief editor, not unkindly. "Well, run home and go to bed now. You can learn how to print when you are older."

"But I ran all the way here," remonstrated Bony, "and I don't want to run back till I see how it's done."

"Where do you live?" inquired the waiting printer.

"In Granville. You see, I promised my teacher I'd print off his piece for him by Thursday, and the type blurs all the time; and I just can't go to sleep till I know how to do the thing right."

Bony's head felt light, as if it had lost part of its weight in water, and his words seemed to bob about and pop out of his mouth without his control.

"Doing job-printing, are you?" inquired the young man at the desk, looking up, but writing ahead without a pause.

"I want to do it. But I do' know whether

you'd feel like showin' me, when you find out the job is one that always has been sent to you!"

Those who were not too busy laughed. Bony felt that he had spoken with salad honesty. But his dark eye lighted up with more fire.

"Well, my son," said the chief editor, "we are very busy. Run away now, and come some day to our foreman there, and he may take you in hand and see if he can make a printer of you."

But the inky man, having got his copy, in turning to leave the room, said to Bony, "You come along with me." And Bony trudged upstairs at his heels.

As they walked the length of the upper hall together, the foreman asked:

"How did you get over from Granville?"

"Walked."

"Walked? — to-night?"

"Yes, sir, and I've got to get back in time to build the mornin' fire, — that's why I'm in such a hurry about the printin'."

"Did you ever set type?"

“Yes, I set type all the fore part of the evenin’.”

The printer took him into an immense room. It was so broad, and long, and high, and so full of roar and strange machines, which seemed to open and shut their mouths, that it quite thrilled Bony’s soul.

“Look around,” said the foreman, hastening to his particular duties. “But don’t get into any trouble.”

Bony understood that he must say and do nothing to interrupt the business going forward. He walked along and looked at the typesetters, and some of them laughed at and chaffed him. Still, with his hands in his small trousers pockets, he walked along, devouring their work with his eyes, until he came to the printing-presses. They were steam-presses, attended by men hardly less quick and methodical than their own action. Reeking sheets rose up, printed all over one side, and placed themselves in the hands of a man who laid them out smooth. This was a fine sight to see. Bony stooped and looked over, under, and around them; they

were automatic giants beside his novelty toy. He thought competition with such powers would be like competition with thunder and lightning. But he soon learned the job-printing was done on other presses.

The foreman touched Bony's shoulder, and shouted in his ear:

"Come on. I'm going to do a little job-printing now, and can show you what you want to know."

He took Bony to a large hand-press,—a chrysalis left by the growth of the printing-office,—and Bony stood by and saw him strike off sheet after sheet of a large advertisement. This press operated on the same principle as his own. He watched how the ink-rollers were applied.

"What made my types blot, d'ye suppose?" shouted the boy. He showed a specimen of his spoiled job. The foreman, glancing it over, told him it was the way he had inked; and let him apply the ink for practice. His lesson lasted more than an hour. It was after one o'clock before the rush in the printing-room

began to subside. Some of the printers left while Bony lingered to take one-quarter of an hour's instruction in typesetting. His mind was at a high pitch of wakefulness and interest. He was a sound and healthy sleeper by nature, but the joy of overcoming difficulties, and acquiring exact knowledge, made him during this night's experience more than a little brown-eyed boy. He was a vigorous young mind, too thoroughly roused to think of rest. He probably learned, with swiftness and exactness, more in that short time than a listless boy would learn in lounging over a printing-case for months.

"I must go back!" Bony cried, with a start, when the clock pointed to twenty minutes of two.

"Ain't you tired?" asked the foreman.

"No, I ain't tired," said the boy, his eyes shining. "I guess you are, though. You've been real good to show me so much. I'm obliged."

Ignoring his thanks, the foreman inquired if he did not want some of the white paper scraps

among the waste. They would be swept out otherwise. Bony gladly made a flat package of some good pieces, and fastened it inside his jacket.

"You better come down to my house, and stay till daylight," said the foreman. "You don't want to prowl along the road at this hour."

"I'd love to do it," said Bony, "but I've a very particular engagement, as early as daylight, in the morning. I can slip along."

"Looks like it was overcast outdoors," said the foreman. "Take care of yourself, young man, and come back and see us again."

Bony offered his hand to be shaken by the foreman.

"I will come over again," he promised. "I'd foot it the whole way again to thank you for your kindness."

As he was running down-stairs, the young man whose entrance into the editor's room he had noticed, hailed him and went down with him.

"Whither away in this special rush, Young Enterprise?"

"Home, sir."

"And you came from Granville?"

"Yes, sir. I had to."

"What's your name?"

"Napoleon Lemon."

"I thought so, — Napoleon, I mean. There were no Alps, eh?"

"I don't know what you mean, sir."

"Well," said the pleasant young journalist, "I've a book here which fell to my share for reviewing, and I am going to give it to you. It's 'Abbott's Life of Napoleon.' When you read that you'll know what I mean."

"You don't intend for me to keep it!" exclaimed Bony.

"Certainly I do. I was just such a little fellow as you once. Slept in the shavings many a night. Sold papers. Had to work along the best way I could. You've been out all night, and yet your eyes are as bright as stars. You're determined to succeed, are you?"

"Yes — sir!"

"Well, go ahead. I want to see you again. You'll take care of yourself, I know."

The journalist turned hastily down the street, and Bony, after giving him good-night, cantered in the opposite direction.

He squeezed the book against his bosom. It was like a loving human companion to him in the dark. For the moon was nowhere to be seen. The wind seemed muffled in blackness, as it blew and pushed him like solid substance. The street-lamps made small oases of light around themselves, but were soon left behind, and with them he left also the last inquisitive-looking policeman, and skurried in the middle of the road between locked and silent homes.

The dark, instead of growing lighter to his accustomed eyes, thickened and enveloped him, so that when he held his straw hat in front of him it made but an imaginary blur against the dense background. It was going to storm. The thunder was still distant, but lightning was reflected among the hills.

Bony's feet wandered into curves from the road. He groped, with one hand before him, and several times came plump against the fence. The last landmark he recognized was the deep

cut around the side of the hill. From there he hugged the earth-wall all the way, and was guided by the sound of the water. There was a railing on the outside of the road, but he preferred to feel the hill-wall. No vehicles passed him. Dismal sounds came from field or wood, like some vivid flash on the background of silence. And then the thunder sounded nearer; and by the time he reached Jarrett's Branch the tramp of rain was behind him. Bony waded through the water, feeling a practical satisfaction in passing it before it could be swollen by rain. He thought of crawfish nipping his toes, to help him impetuously through.

After going on, as he believed, he came again to Jarrett's Branch, and was utterly lost in the vast dark. The rain began to pelt, but it became a steady pour, instead of a thunder-storm. So he had scarcely a flash of lightning to help him.

Bony put his book inside his shirt-bosom as the safest place, and pulled his straw hat firmly on his head for an umbrella. Then, turning his

face directly opposite the Branch, groped and groped, stretching both arms forward. After a long time his feet suddenly descended, and he sprawled across a narrow drain. Creeping up the opposite side, he came against a fence, his hands full of mud and his shoulders dripping with the storm. He held to the fence, and listened to a deep breathing on the other side. Then a cow coughed. And believing he had reached a barn lot, the boy climbed the fence, resolving to find the shelter of the stable until it grew lighter. He moved against something soft, which immediately gave a startled heave and the clatter of a bell. The cows seemed huddled together to let the summer rain run off them, and, guided by their sighing and their cud-chewing, he made a half circle around them, and felt his way slowly ahead with bare toes. His caution brought him to another fence, along which he moved until a yielding door in it revealed that it was not a close-boarded enclosure, but the barn itself.

Napoleon drew a relieved breath as this small door let him in. It was the stable. He could

have touched warm flanks as he passed the stalls; here a hoof stirred, and there a sleepy horse ground his hay. With hand straight ahead of him, the boy reached the main floor, and it took but a minute after that to hunt the fixed ladder, which gave ascent to the mow. How sweet and good the hay was! Rain beat upon the shingles, and caused him delightful shudders as he snuggled deeper and deeper, digging a hay burrow and scratching his hands with a point or sticky joint, until he was bedded in hay to his neck. He heard the horses breathe and stamp; perhaps a rat gnawing in the granary; or the uneasy stir and twit of baby swallows under the eaves. No seat in senate or assembly will ever give Napoleon the delight he found in that hay bed. And now he felt tired and drowsy.

“I must just take cat-naps,” he thought, “and be out at the first streak of light. I do’ know how far I got to go yet, except that it’s most all the way from Jarrett’s Branch.”

But this mental alarm-clock failed to act on a weary body. He fell into one of his sound,

solid sleeps, and woke to see daylight struggling through the cracks of the barn. He leaped straight up, the hay bounding like an elastic cushion with him.

Bony tramped hurriedly towards the entrance of the mow, but another head rose in his way. It was a man's head, and awake, and, seeing him, the man rose into a sitting posture. The hayseed spattered on his clothes did not detract from their fit and dignity. His eyes were large and dark, but their whites looked blood-shot. For an instant Bony took him to be the owner of the barn, laying in wait for uninvited little boys.

His suspicions were confirmed by the man's stretching out one hand to detain him as he tried to scud around him.

"What do you want, mister?" exclaimed Bony, divided by several apprehensions. He ought to be gone, for fear some one would reach Granville before he did. The weather had cleared. It was no longer raining, and he could make good time, for, steeped in hay, the warmth of his body had dried him; he was sore

in some of his muscles, but vigorous and fresh.

"Whose boy are you?" inquired the man, huskily.

"Now he's going to sue me for sleepin' in his barn," thought Bony. So he replied, with great caution, but respectful sturdiness:

"I'm my own boy. I guess it was after three o'clock when I crept in here, and I ain't done any harm to the hay. It was the darkest night I ever saw. And I got lost; and I run against this barn. Wouldn't you come in out o' the wet if you'd been me?"

"Certainly. I did the same thing."

"Ain't you the owner of the barn then?"

"No."

"Well, what you keepin' me from gettin' past you for?" exclaimed Bony, knitting his brows. "I ain't got time to stay around here." He rubbed the dried mud from his hands, and dusted his small trousers in resolute preparation to descend the ladder.

"Do you live near here?" inquired the man.

"I live in Granville," said Bony.

The more he looked at the stranger the better

he liked him. There was nothing to be afraid of, except that the man might detain him talking. So he added:

"I got to be there by sunup, too."

"Your mother will be worried about you."

"No, she won't," said Bony. "She's dead this long while. But Ban might be."

"You said Ban," continued the man, breaking bits of hay rapidly, so that they fell in dust on his knee. "Ban who?"

"Ban Sister," said Bony, tramping towards the mow-entrance.

"One word more," urged this queer companion, leaning on one side so that he could stretch his arm across the boy's way. "What's your name?"

"Now he thinks he's cute," thought Bony. "He wants to make some complaint about me. I good mind not to tell him!"

"What do you want to know my name for, mister?"

"You say you live in Granville, and have a sister Ban. Did you ever know any children there by the name of Lemon?"

"Yes," replied the boy, startled.

"Have they — how long?" The stranger was large, fine and firm looking; but Bony noticed that he trembled and hesitated, and the dim daylight gave his face a pallid cast. "Have they been dead long?"

Thought the boy, "Now, what crazy fellow's this! No," he replied, "they ain't never been dead at all."

The man sat up straight and looked him keenly over. "You're the boy, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am," owned Bony, grudgingly. "What difference does that make about anything?"

The man clasped his hands together nervously several times, and took them apart again.

"Do you ever think about your father?"

The boy scowled.

"Not when I can help it," he said, wagging his head.

"Why?"

"What do you know about my father?"

"Oh, I know all about him," replied the stranger. "He was a miserable wretch."

"You let him alone, will you?" said Bony, wagging his head with more force.

"Everybody knows what he was," pursued the stranger. "I don't wonder you try to put him out of your mind. Does your sister try to forget him, too?"

"You let my father alone, will ye?" repeated Bony, hotly. "I'm a little feller, and I've got my sister to look after, and I'm doin' the best I know how. But when I've grown as big as you are, if anybody gives me a word against my father,—no matter what he was,—I'll handle whoever does it, now mind ye!"

With this defiance, Bony skipped half over the man, who stretched himself on the hay, with his arms under his face. As the boy climbed backward, down the ladder, he observed that his queer mow-mate was shaking all over.

"Seems mighty tickled over nothin'," muttered Bony.

At last the boy rounded the eastern flank of Parnassus, and came, half jaded, with his long lope into the broad, familiar main street of Granville. He clinched his book and printing-paper

to his breast; neither had been soaked by the rain, and he had laid them beside him in the hay. With the other arm he kept up a swinging motion to help his feet propel him. The rising sun was at his back. There was no sign of stirring in the household where he belonged. He took advantage of this fact to put his printing-paper and book in the old house sanctum before going to his daily duties.

The mistress of the boarding-house opened her front door and took a view of the weather. Then she called her boy of all work, and as he walked into the kitchen behind her, she neither knew, nor would she have cared, if she had known, that, instead of spending the night in health-giving sleep, he had accomplished a heavy task, laid on him by his own eager mind.

When Bony returned from the butcher's with the morning beefsteak, he paused a moment at Bancroft's corner and whistled to Ban.

Ban was around the corner, waiting for the signal, and while Bony thought of her as sound asleep in uncle 'Nelus's closely locked house, she

ran up and shook his hand affectionately. They had some original ways of greeting each other.

"Did you learn all about it, dear?" she inquired.

"Pretty much what I wanted," replied Bony. "Soon's I get off from my work I'm goin' to make a decent copy of that poetry. And I'll take you to the Calliope Society with me this evenin'. You must look nice," said Bony. "You must do the dressin' for both of us. Wear your open-work hat and that fine thing to put around you 't used to belong to mother."

Ban's sparkling countenance fell.

"Bony," she said, "uncle 'Nelus done last night as he always threatened. He locked me out."

Bony placed the beefsteak on the fence, and seemed to prepare himself for action.

"What did you do?"

"I went down to Mrs. Morris's. She let me sleep there. Our house is all shut up, yet; and uncle gets up so early. Do you s'pose he won't let me come back?"

"I don't know," said Bony, aghast, looking

at the grim house. "But don't you worry. I'll have to begin to take care of you sooner, that's all. Go back to Mrs. Morris's, and if he don't let you in to-day, I'll try to manage. Can't stop, now. This is the boarders' breakfast." He gathered the paper of beefsteak off the fence. "I saw a man in a barn, this morning," he added, struck by the recollection as an odd conceit which under the circumstances would amuse them, "that wanted to know how long you and me had been dead!"

"Saw a man in a barn!" repeated Ban, pausing with her lips apart.

"Yes. When it rained I crept in there out of the shower. And he seemed to have done the same thing. But he was dressed up. I don't see why he tramped along there in the dark. He was determined to ask all the questions about us he could!"

"Bony, which way had he come?"

"I do' know; and I don't care which way he goes."

"Bony," continued Ban, impressively, "had he dark eyes, and was he a l-a-rge man?"

"Yes," replied Bony, indifferently, shifting the steak in his hands.

"And he inquired all about us? Bony, it was father!"

Her brother widened his eyes and sniffed at the suggestion.

"Ho! I guess not."

"Bony, it was father!"

"Why doesn't he come and hunt us up, then, instead of creepin' into barns and askin' questions?"

"He is coming. And maybe somebody told him that we were dead."

Bony turned over these suppositions in his mind with little favor. "I wouldn't say anything about this, if I's you," he counselled. "Specially don't you say anything to uncle 'Nelus. I won't ever," said Bony, decidedly, "let strange people make remarks about — father."

Ban promised, with a beatified countenance. She ran off towards Mrs. Morris's, the eastern sun gilding her dark cheek; and as she ran she kept whispering over and over:

"Father, father, father, father."

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN IN THE YARD.

AT eight o'clock of that evening Bony was waiting for Ban at the corner, and Ban was approaching him, prinked in motley array. The Welsh laundress had helped her with the loan of a newer hat than the openworked, and a basque of spotted calico.

"I don't look good," said Ban to Bony, in distress. "But uncle 'Nelus has kept the house shut all day. I went and knocked twice. So Mrs. Morris just borrowed these things for me. I feel awfuller than I ever did in my life!"

"It's 'count of the hat," observed Bony. "Couldn't you turn it round the other way?"

Ban turned it.

"I think it looks worse," said Bony.

"I'll just go right back, Bony Lemon! Look at the folks going along Main Street. They don't go up to the College lookin' like me."

Bony strongly demurred. His eyes stood out

with earnestness. He told Ban that, while he wished she had her things, if it would make her feel better, for his part he considered her as ornamental a lady as any going up the hill that night.

"You're my lady, when I take you anywhere," he explained. "The invitations always say 'Mr. — and lady.'"

Thus consoled, Ban proceeded on the way with him. He showed her a perfect copy which he had taken of the verses.

"When I make my paper," said this young brother, spitting his feet on the sidewalk with energetic tread, "I'll get you a new openwork hat."

"They don't wear 'em now," observed Ban.

Bony did not linger on this point.

"And if uncle 'Nelus won't let you in, I'll provide for ye, somehow."

This was almost as heart-warming to Ban as being provided for already.

A great many couples were going up the hill to open Society. Ban's eyes devoured the elegance of the young ladies. Some were students

from the Seminaries. But the Granville girl proper was generally an exquisite creature, — the result of clear air, a healthy, stimulating life, and the keeping of the Puritan Sabbath. In most cases her father had distinguished himself, and her mother was a cultivated woman. The grace of home life clung to the Granville girl in the streets. The very air around her was sweetened as if by the scent of her home garden. Everybody exchanged greetings with everybody else. It was barely dusk, and one star hung like a huge, trembling drop of light just over Sugar Loaf. People who live in a refined village get the full benefit of neighborhood life, which people in large cities often miss.

While both children were using all their breath to tug up hill, Ban fancied a future, in which Bony and herself would be like those nice young people, and father, returned to them, would be like the very nice fathers in Granville. She forgot her two kinds of calico.

They entered the College building with other groups, and slipped up stairways and through halls. Bony watched the open doors, hoping to

see his teacher. Some of the rooms were handsomely furnished. Others looked very bare. But almost all private doors were closed. They came, finally, to the suite of Society rooms, and were ushered in, and seated in chairs placed along the walls.

Bony was so anxious to get his proof to the head of the room, where his teacher sat, that he touched the sleeve of a deputy-usher who seemed to have nothing to do, and asked if he would please take it up.

The young gentleman had a white flower on his coat, and his hair shone with marvellous polish. He heard Bony's whispered account of the copy, and ran it over with a critical eye himself.

"Hands. Hands grow out of the ground, eh?" said this young gentleman, sneering, not unkindly, at that poetical extract. "I wish gloves did. I'd box a dozen pairs or so." He was glad to take the proof to its author, and have a chance to repeat his criticism.

Ban thought she had never seen anything equal to this Society hall. It was rather nar-

row, but high, and mightily frescoed. The president sat on a platform in a chair of state, and the chief officers sat near him. There was a small table and a hammer with which to rap on it when the exercises needed regulating. Several pictures were on the walls, but she was certain the one standing at the end of the room had never been equalled. She had heard it was painted by a gentleman in a far-off city called Cincinnati, and that it represented the muse Calliope, for whom the Society was named. Calliope appeared a girlish blonde in airy robes; the name Allegro would have suited her just as well, had she not held in one hand a scroll bearing in Greek her own motto, "Truth, Excellence, Eloquence." She abode, life size, in a heavy gilt frame, having gauze curtains to partially screen her; and Ban's eye was not one to see any defect in the foreshortening of her advancing limb.

All the triple rows of chairs were filled by visitors, leaving an aisle down the centre of the room, and down this aisle the gentlemen on the programme came, each in his turn, and planted

himself for action before the picture of Calliope. The salutorian told the assembled company six times that they were welcome to the halls of Calliope; then, finding he could not remember the rest, drew his manuscript from his bosom and read it through. Bony's teacher read his poem. Then there followed a warm discussion, and a number of grandly sounding orations. Every young man seemed to have formed his opinions for life, and to feel heated towards every other young man who differed with him. Latin was nothing to them; and men who lived and died thousands of years ago seemed their most familiar acquaintances. Ban felt her ambitious desires greatly stirred. If father would only come back and send Bony to college, and she could see Bony standing in a swallow-tailed black coat, with bulging shirt-front and perfect tie, talking so elegantly, that was all life need to offer to her!

But sitting alongside of her, scraping the floor with his bare toes, his eyes full of speculation, he was just good enough, after all!

When the exercises were quite over, the

Calliopes conducted their guests through the library which adjoined their hall. Bony and Ban kept at the heels of larger folks, Bony secretly anxious to get out of the building and take his sister home, that he might return and sit in the principal entrance door until the later business session of the Society was over, to wait for the decision about programme printing. But Ban wished to linger at the heels of larger folks because she enjoyed that neighborhood. The expanses of bookshelves, the busts and pictures, delighted her eyes. She took swift notes of the most elegant girls, and gave secret twitches and adjustments to her own spotted calico basque, which was lapped a hand's-length over its fastenings.

But Bony finally moved her through the exit door and found their way down-stairs.

The town clock boomed ten when they ran across the dewy Campus.

"If I was going home to uncle 'Nelus's, I couldn't get in now, anyway," said Ban.

"Didn't he open the door at all to-day?" inquired Bony.

"No. And I watched for him in the yard, but he didn't come out. Do you suppose he's gone off?" exclaimed Ban, with sudden suspicion, as if going off were the besetting weakness of her guardians.

"Where'd he go to?" said Bony. "Uncle 'Nelus don't visit any folks. He hasn't been even as far as Newark since I can remember."

Ban gazed down dubiously at the masses of shade the maples made in Granville streets.

"Bony Lemon, do you think anybody'd hurt poor old uncle 'Nelus?"

Bony scoffed at the idea.

"I never heard of anybody bein'—hurt in Granville, did you?" ruminated Ban.

Bony said the folks that robbed and killed were all in big cities.

And Ban further reassured herself by mentioning that there was not much in the house to steal.

Yet this did not explain uncle 'Nelus's queer seclusion. With one impulse they turned a corner out of their way to go past his house. The nearer they approached it the more rapidly they walked.

The night was clear and starry. In most of the houses the lights were out, for the village went to bed early. Here and there a piano tinkled, and through lace curtains Bony and Ban saw some families entertaining friends. Uncle 'Nelus's near neighbors were having a good time, while his dingy house was shut in mystery around him.

The children patted along until they quite reached his fence. Then Bony grasped his sister's arm and held her back.

"There's a man in the yard," he whispered.

"It is a man!" she confirmed, in a whisper lower than his.

The man was standing in front of the house, and his back was towards them. He took a step forward, and hesitated. Then he moved around the side of the house and looked up at the windows. He took off his hat and leaned his face on his hand.

Bony was stooping to peer between the boards of the fence. Ban was on her knees, crouched close to him. She very much desired to scream for the neighbors, but knowing that Bony would

not run, determined to stick close to him, whatever the man did.

Bony now breathed an exclamation which startled her so that she grasped the fence.

"Git out!" whispered Bony. "It's the man I saw in that barn!"

"O Bony Lemon!"

"'Tis—the very man that asked so many questions! Now, what does he want around uncle 'Nelus's house?"

"Maybe," said Ban, her hands turning cold on the board, and her heart beating so that it shook her—"it's—father—and he wants us!"

Bony rolled his eyes aside at his sister. They showed large and liquid in the dim light, but their look combated her suspicion.

Ban stood up, and, without knowing that she was going to do so, called softly:

"Father—father?"

Her secret call, suppressed so long, had broken loose from her.

"What you doin'!" exclaimed Bony, dragging at her calico skirt.

But seeing that the man wheeled towards them and was coming, he stood up also, determined not to appear cowardly.

"Who called me?" said the man, stopping just at the fence. "Are you here, children?"

"Yes, sir," replied Ban, out of her great faith. "Was you lookin' for us?"

"Bony and Blanche, is it?" inquired the man.

"Yes, sir!"

"I was looking for you. I thought perhaps you were in the house."

He reached up and helped Ban over the fence, and, carrying her out of the shadow of the house, stopped and looked closely at her features. His elbow was twitched. Bony stood beside him.

"Say, mister!" said Bony, his voice shaking with agitation.

"It ain't any mister, dear," said Ban, being set down in the dewy grass. "It's our father."

"You don't know me, my son."

"No, sir!"

"But I knew you in the barn, this morning, though I never saw you in your life before."

You look like the old picture of little Tom Lemon, when he used to run around these streets. And, though your uncle 'Nelus had told me both you children were dead, after seeing you I came back to inquire again."

"A-w!" exclaimed Ban. "Did uncle 'Nelus tell you that?"

"Yes. I drove over from the railway station last night, and came straight to this house. He told me that, and shut the door in my face. I started to walk to Newark."

"You felt awful bad," said Ban, with ready perception. "But when you came back to-day, didn't other folks tell you different?"

"Yes. I have been waiting all day for some glimpse of you. I thought—perhaps you wouldn't know me." The pain in this admission moved Bony somewhat.

Such other advances as his returned father might then have made to him were cut short by a noise within the house. They all heard it, though it was so indistinct that immediately afterwards they could not be sure.

"Uncle 'Nelus must be in there," whispered

Ban, fearfully. "The house was shut all day." How terrible it was to think he may have been lying hurt within those musty doors, while the whole pleasant day, beginning and ending in dew, stuffed with bird-songs and cheerful life, had passed heedlessly over him!

"We must get into the house," said their father, decidedly.

"But everything's locked," said Ban.

Bony thought of the wooden-slatted window in the kitchen, and mentioned that these bars could be wrenched away. In moving around the house they heard that half-distinct noise again.

The man's hands broke away the wooden slats and pushed up the window. They also hoisted Bony up, and he crept into the kitchen. Then he groped for the door, unlocked and unbolted it, and let the others in.

Ban fumbled for a candle end in every place where such a relic might be. But her father took matches from his pocket, and, lighting one, moved through the house with the children at his side. The match lasted into the sitting-room. But nobody was there. He scraped another, and,

holding its little flame up, they explored the mouldy front-house. Moving through the hall this light died out. He reached forward at the door to strike another, and stumbled upon a heap of something which groaned so suddenly that Ban uttered a scream.

How long it seemed before that match turned from blue to yellow! before it outlined uncle 'Nelus lying against the stairs! before it assured them there was no mark of violence about him; but that he was helpless and conscious, and staring at them with awful eyes.

Bony's father thrust matches into his hand and bade him strike them. All three stooped by the old man, holding the yellow tremulous lights close to him. He moved his eyes from the children to the man accompanying them.

"Tom Lemon!" he whispered. "Tom Lemon again! Where's my cane?"

Uncle 'Nelus's tongue was not paralyzed. He used it occasionally against the lonesome-looking man sitting by, whom so many of the neighbors had forgotten.

"Will you go away, Tom Lemon?" he cried.

"Certainly, when you are better," replied the children's father.

"Why did you come back here?"

"To take care of my children. I am fit to undertake it now. I waited until I was. And I am able to do it well, and to return what you have spent on them."

"You can't return my sister's life."

"I know it. But I can try to make some little atonement to them and her and you."

Uncle 'Nelus dozed, and broke out again vindictively: "The boy's got your evil nature. He'll go against you, too!"

"The boy," said their father, "defended me to a person he thought a stranger. He's got enough of his mother in him to have some mercy on a prodigal father."

"Take them out of the house and go!" said 'Nelus Allbright, fiercely. "Take the girl, and leave me alone in my old age!"

"I'll never treat you so," said their father.

He rose up to bring the children into the

room, and found them sitting on the floor, just outside.

They came up to the bedside, one on each side of him. Ban crept closest to the old uncle, and arched her arm around his miserable head.

"We do think a good deal of you, uncle 'Nelus," cooed Ban. "Our father wouldn't make us leave you alone in this big old house." She kissed his cheek-bone.

"Don't hurt me!" said uncle 'Nelus.

"I think Bony could do it carefuller than I do," observed Ban. "Can he try?"

"No," said uncle 'Nelus, savagely. "Old broken man like me! Who'd want to!"

Bony was secretly of that opinion himself, but he stepped up and touched his lips very lightly to uncle 'Nelus's cheek-bone. He thought it was silly to kiss men. But his heart was touched. And uncle 'Nelus did not resent the caress.

"You must get off to bed, now," said Tom Lemon to his children, marshalling them towards the door.

Ban parted with her father, in some haste to fix Bony's old room for him. She was therefore surprised to hear Bony patting down-stairs, and hurried after, to call him back.

"I got to go over there," explained Bony, indicating his employer's house, "and give notice for quits. I'll be along bright and early in the morning."

"And you'll never go away again! O Bony! I've always said father would come back."

"Yes, he's come," admitted Bony.

"And ain't he nice! Ain't his forehead white and tall!"

"I noticed his head," admitted Bony.

"Oh, don't you like him?"

"I sort o' do," said Bony, heartily. "I used to think I never would. But I've took a notion to him, already, so I think most as much of him as I do of you."

Later in the summer weather, uncle 'Nelus sat cushion-propped in the yard of pleasant evenings. All the neighbors noticed how his affliction had softened his face. Ban and Bony

and their father were constantly with him. The house was being painted and repaired, and refurnished. A housekeeper looked after the family comfort.

The children's father had opened a law office in Newark, and drove back and forth every day. They went to school; the Seminary looming in perspective before Ban, and the College before Bony. Never again did the openwork hat, the ancient mantilla, and faded cloak parade with Ban; but the pretty dresses and delicate ways of Granville girls became hers.

As for Bony, when he drove through Newark once, with his father, and pointed out the office where his midnight labors had been so eager, his father smiled and said, with twinkling eyes:

"You shall have a hand in newspaper-making, my boy, when you are ready to choose your business. Whatever you want to do, you shall do."

The printing-press, departing from Mantonya's old house, took up its permanent residence in Bony's own room. And besides printing many

a programme for its busy owner, it once threw off several dozens of this card of invitation:

*Blanche and Napoleon Lemon present
their compliments, desiring that you will
be present on*

*THURSDAY EVENING
to assist in celebrating
UNCLE 'NELUS'S BIRTHDAY.*

THE ASSISTANT

A NEWSPAPER STORY

THE ASSISTANT.

"ARE you the editor?" inquired the old farmer, pausing inside the sanctum.

"No," promptly replied India. "I'm only the assistant. The editor has gone to the depot. Won't you sit down?"

She rose and placed a box for his seat. The only chair in the room was a revolving one, screwed to the floor beside the desk.

The farmer had come through a saddler's shop to mount to the office. The publishing room was divided from this by a temporary partition of pine boards. He sat down with his hat on, and looked curiously around. Leaving his mud-spattered person out of consideration, it was a place of oddities and beginnings, rough plastered, and containing but two win-

dows, which looked north over the black street, the rapidly springing wooden houses, the vanishing railroad and prairie. Some woodcuts were pasted on the wall. A fancy paper-weight was among the files on the desk. A bench, pushed out at the end, as if its occupant had just left it, stood before a table that depended, for one corner's support, on a barrel. It was the exchange barrel.

The farmer, discountenancing extravagant luxury in his own home, rather approved of what he saw, and decidedly approved of the assistant. She might be either eighteen or twenty-five; was brown, with clear, black eyes, and a knot of curly hair on top her head. She looked live, capable, and girlish; able to break a span of mules, and sell them to advantage afterwards, yet delicate enough to wear the yellow blossoms of the wild sensitive plant bunched in her hair and belt.

"Well, I come to subscribe for the paper," said the farmer, after she had addressed several envelopes, talking to him about the weather as she did so.

"My brother will be glad to have your name," said the assistant. "How shall I write it?"

"Isr'el Bonebrake's my name," said the farmer, going deep into his trousers and bringing up a ragged pocketbook, which, being opened, disclosed green banks of wealth. "What's the amount?"

"One dollar a year, fifty cents for six months, or twenty-five cents for three months, payable in advance."

"You don't ask enough," remarked Mr. Bonebrake, coming forward to lay down his dollar. "Two dollars is the figger for county papers. You folks has started up with the town. You must make it pay."

"Oh, we shall," replied the assistant, confidently. "My brothers will advance the price as they improve the paper."

"How many air ther' of you?"

"My two brothers and myself. One attends to the publishing and advertising; the other edits. I assist. We've heard of you, Mr. Bonebrake, — you own some stock-farms about here?"

"Yes," replied the farmer, nonchalantly. "I

got a couple 'o thousand acres or so west o' the place. The place is growin', isn't it?"

"Wonderfully. I think it's bound to be a grain and stock centre."

"Now you talk!" said the farmer, with enthusiasm. "Why, when I came here, twenty year ago, 'twan't nothing but perrara, far as the eye could see. We've planted hedges, and groves has growed up. And six months ago, the two railroads struck us and crossed, and here's the town! I killed rattlesnakes where Powell's puttin' up his ellyvator. We'll be a city."

"It's only a question of time," said the girl.

This pleased Mr. Bonebrake so that he repeated several times it *wasn't* nothin' but a question of time.

"So you young folks come on here, and started a paper. Had you ever run a paper before?"

"My brothers are practical printers. I have learned to do a great many things."

"I bet you have," said the farmer, with approval. "I like smart wimmen. Some folks doesn't; but I do."

"Oh, I just help my brothers. If the paper succeeds, you must credit it to them. In the course of a year they hope to get a large press, and keep the hand-presses only for jobbing. They will have to be very close and careful, but if they make a good paper I know the people will stand by them."

"They will *that!*" said Mr. Bonebrake. "They won't lose nothin' for startin' when the town's so young."

Steps on the saddler's stairs now brought a young fellow into the room, who threw his hat with a slam at the table, and cried out:

"I never saw such an abominable place as this is!"

The assistant gave him a swift, salutary glance.

"Mr. Bonebrake," she said, "this is the editor, Mr. Pink Bradshaw. One of our new subscribers, Pink. My brother has not brought his editorial office up to his notions yet, Mr. Bonebrake. He's ambitious. He would like to receive his patrons in something like a palace-car, you know."

The farmer advanced his hearty hand and shook the young man's.

"Well, I declare," said he, "you don't look nothin' but a boy!"

The young fellow laughed.

"Isn't your other brother no older?" inquired Mr. Bonebrake of the assistant.

"Younger."

"We try to make up in pluck what we lack in years," said Pink. "But —"

"But we're open to suggestions from old residents," said the assistant.

"Well, I sejest 'keep on,'" said Mr. Bonebrake. "Just you keep ahead."

They took him through the publishing department, where he saw Jo Bradshaw and another printer setting type, the hand-presses, the ink-pads and stack of printing-paper. He expressed local pride in the establishment, and shook hands with the entire force before going away.

"Now, if you'll come to my place," he said, in the door, "I'll show you my kind of machinery: wind-pumps, and stawk-sheds, and tilin'."

"My brother has been thinking of visiting your farm and some other prominent stockmen," said the assistant, "to get an article about your methods. It might be useful."

"All right; come ahead! We'll kill a chicken and give you a bite to eat."

The farmer went smiling down-stairs, and the editor's assistant fixed her clear eyes on her brother.

"I don't care!" he said, sitting down at his table and striking it with his hand. "You can fix it up with the old mossbacks first-rate, but this is a corner of the earth I cannot endure."

"So you thought you could tread on his local pride and not get hurt in return?"

"I didn't see him when I first came in. The mud! Just look at the mud sticking to my feet!"

He showed the black, waxy soil. He was a sensitive-looking, delicate-faced young fellow, fair, blue-eyed, yet with much reserve force apparent about him.

"The wind rasps my very soul!"

"Did you gather any items?" inquired the assistant, calmly, having drawn a leaf forward and taken up her pencil to make a local of Mr. Bonebrake's visit.

"Yes, my dear, I did. There's a man just got off the north train to prospect this place for the purpose of starting another paper. He has money. I talked with him, or he talked to me. He goes right to the point."

"That's what made the mud, and the wind, and the place so unendurable," said India. "Well, let him start it."

"And run us out in two months!"

"He won't run us out."

India rose up and approached her brother. Her face was lambent, as if she were the spirit of fire.

"Pink Bradshaw, didn't we make up our minds to locate here, and take all the consequences?"

"Yes."

"Am I not your older sister?"

"Yes."

"Didn't I educate myself and manage to get

you boys places, and give you something of a chance for yourselves?"

"Yes, my dear, you did."

"Did you ever know me to fail in anything I undertook?"

"Never."

She rested one hand on his shoulder and tipped up his face to meet her eyes.

"I have pledged myself, my health, my life, my brains, to the success of you two boys. Pink, I would lay my right hand down to be cut off at the wrist, if that would secure success to you. But, instead of that, I can only give the labor of that hand. Any woman who honors her men-folks, and pushes their fortunes, honors and glorifies herself. My darling boy, if you and Jo don't make men that I can be proud of, you will ruin my life and drown it in shame."

The young man's sensitive face kindled from hers.

"I wasn't whining!" he exclaimed, as if spurred. "But a man can see impossibilities where a woman can't."

"Thank heaven for a woman's vision, then.

I don't believe in impossibilities. I have done too many impossible things while people stood by to tell me I couldn't. When I say I pledge my life, and brains, and might, to the doing of a thing, that thing will be done."

"I know," said Pink, with enthusiasm, "you're the bravest girl in the world."

"Not at all. I'm a great baby who loves her brothers, and is afraid of snakes. But if I *made up my mind*," said India, stretching her fisted arm before her, "to take a rattler round the neck and strangle it to death, I should do it, if it covered my hand with bites, and killed me."

"I believe you!" said Pink, with a start, as if his elbows had been electrified. "Where's my clip and pencil? I must get to work. You're a howler, Lady Macbeth."

"You're a fine-strung poet, Johnny Keats. Haul the barrel and table over this way. I want to know everything you put in that first-page article."

They consulted together, India starting the theme. Pink produced decorated thoughts. She took out his adjectives and reduced his sen-

tences. Jo called for copy. India took it to him, and distributed locals before the other printer.

“Don’t you want to dress up your advertisements now, while I set type for you?” she said to her younger brother, who at once washed his hands, ran them through dark, curly hair like his sister’s, and took his ruddy face away to pore sturdily over her desk.

This force was a regiment composed of officers; the other printer was the foreman. He felt a vital interest in the paper’s prosperity. He clicked his type faster and with nicer exactness, vaguely propelled by the young woman working silently in the same room. This printer often told his wife, in a general way, that some women would make their men get on and work their level best, whether or no.

India wanted Jo to learn how to express himself in practical forms. He was careless, and his conversational English stained with double negatives and many abominations. He was raw in boyhood, yet gave better business promise than his brother.

When the sun hung just above the horizon, casting long shadows eastward, she went home, stopping at one of the wooden groceries for provisions. The whole town was composed of yellow-pine excrescences, from the first gigantic hotel, to the tiniest land-office. A number of people nodded to her, though she had yet no girl intimates. Men, untying their teams to drive home across the prairie, gazed curiously at her. Though the paper was but a few months old, they knew the minutest details about it.

As India approached her unfenced house on a path which cut across hummocks of wiry grass, she was looking forward, as the thrifty assistant-woman always does, to that time when the boys would run their firmly established paper alone, and she could devote herself to the residence, lined with pictures, glittering with silver, full of comforts, which would take the place of this three-room nest. The prairie did not bound her ambitions.

“But wherever one stands,” remarked India, opening the door, “the centre of the earth is

always exactly beneath him, and the centre of the heavens exactly over his head."

There was a sitting-room, and a bedroom, and a kitchen supplemented by a tail of shed. The furnishing was scant, but homelike, eked out by the ornaments a quick-witted girl can make. In the bedroom she hung her sunbonnet on its nail. It was her room. The boys took turns sleeping in the office, the one who stayed at home camping on a folding-couch in the sitting-room.

"Well-nurtured girls in various cities," said India to herself, "are now sitting down to dinner, and talking about next month's trip out of town. But the assistant on the *Rolling City Chronicle* must light a fire and get the boys' supper, — not neglecting to darn those last two pairs of socks, while the people are gathering."

When everything was ready, she pinned a white cloth outside the window, and was busy with a sock drawn over one hand until the signal was obeyed. Then the three sat down, and India exerted herself as if the boys were desirable gentlemen acquaintances come to pay

court to her. Jo was always less a cub, and Pink more a poet, in India's presence.

She followed them back to the office about dusk. A rising sweetness was abroad, and the air so clear it cut out every object with sharp edges. The town herder was driving home the cows from their free pasture up the ridge. A freight-train, far off on the western road, trailed into sight, and puffs of smoke on the northern horizon denoted some approach along that line. The prairie was like a mountain plateau in giving one a sense of nearness to the sky. The hemisphere of many-shaded greens pressed sharply against the melting west.

At the office India hurried to finish whatever was behind on the week's issue, while the rest of the establishment set type. When the ten-o'clock passenger whizzed by, their week's work was done. Jo and the foreman were already printing off the papers. The rumble of the presses followed India and Pink down-stairs.

"Climbing upward in the night," she quoted, taking hold of his arm as they stumbled past stores where the kerosene lamps were being

put out. "I wonder if I shall turn out a mere monkey, agile in climbing? I've always been undertaking something. Pink, look at the constellations. Don't they seem ready to prick us,—they are so near with their sharp points? What a grand thing it is to accomplish in this world! If we die to-night, our week's work is well done: it's always wise to be prepared for accidents."

"But what does it amount to, when it is done?" sniffed Pink. "That other man will run us out. I haven't any head for practical matters, India."

"Your whimpering is passed over without notice. Did you ever think,—practical matters are just like piano-keys: if you don't touch them with knowledge, you make discords. We can't have a piano for about four years yet. But when we get home, I'll take down the banjo and plunk you a tune."

"And if we succeed in making a paper here, what outlook does it give us?"

"Honor, influence, home. A seat in the Senate for you or Jo, if you hit the popular need, and care for it. In time, a trip to Europe. All

the time, exchange of prods with other minds, and a chance to push what is good and punish what is mean. At summer resorts the well-nurtured young lady may now be entering a grand hop; but I am going home with ink on my finger, and the assurance in my soul that in some vast future larger battles will be given me to fight, and I shall grow as victor."

Past midnight, however, the assistant saw her former victories crumble before her eyes. Pink's shouting struck her through the ear like a dagger. She crossed a great change while leaping over the side of her bed. The office was on fire, but Jo was not in it, for Jo had waked Pink, and run off to others for help.

India passed through a nightmare of throwing clothing on, finding everything inside out or upside down. She was running across the open prairie with her brother; the streets rang with cries of fire, and all the inhabitants of a town so slightly built turned out with terror.

A crowd was already passing pails of water from hand to hand. There was not a hose or

a Babcock extinguisher within scores of miles. The harness-store had smaller buildings shouldering against it, which the owners were trying to save. A steady, roaring pillar of flame stood up from the tinder structure, lighting the prairie for miles, showing the metallic glitter of steel rails, imperfect outlines of mill or elevator, turning to black blisters the fronts of shops across the wide street, and reflecting itself in the eyes of a thousand men and women. •

It was too late to do anything but confine the fire, if possible, to the one crumbling block. There was at the time no wind, and the pails were made to do vigorous duty. In went the roof, sending up a constellation which put out half the stars.

“This is too bad, sis, ain’t it, now?” said a human voice, through the tumult, to India’s ears. Mr. Bonebrake, the stock-farmer, was there, his whip in hand, ready for driving home.

“I was settin’ up with hogs to ship to-night,” he shouted, “and was one of the first to see the fire. It bu’st out all at once, full blaze.”

"I'm afraid you won't get your paper to-morrow," said India.

"Pshaw! you'll lose considerable, won't you?"

"Burning up there is all that my brothers and I have, except a little cheap furniture. There goes what I have worked for since we were left alone in the world."

"Pshaw! No insurance?"

"We were to insure the latter part of this week. Every dollar was needed before. But I would like," said the assistant, shaking her finger at the fire, "to get the better of that!"

"Pshaw!" groaned Mr. Bonebrake, with full Western sympathy.

"My brothers," said India, feeling her heart swell in proportion to the calamity, "will take that old fire for a mere candle, though, to light them on the road. And I'll help!"

"What'll you do now?"

"We'll have to get presses, some way, and start the paper again."

"Got any backers?"

"No."

"Yes, you have," said Mr. Bonebrake, rising

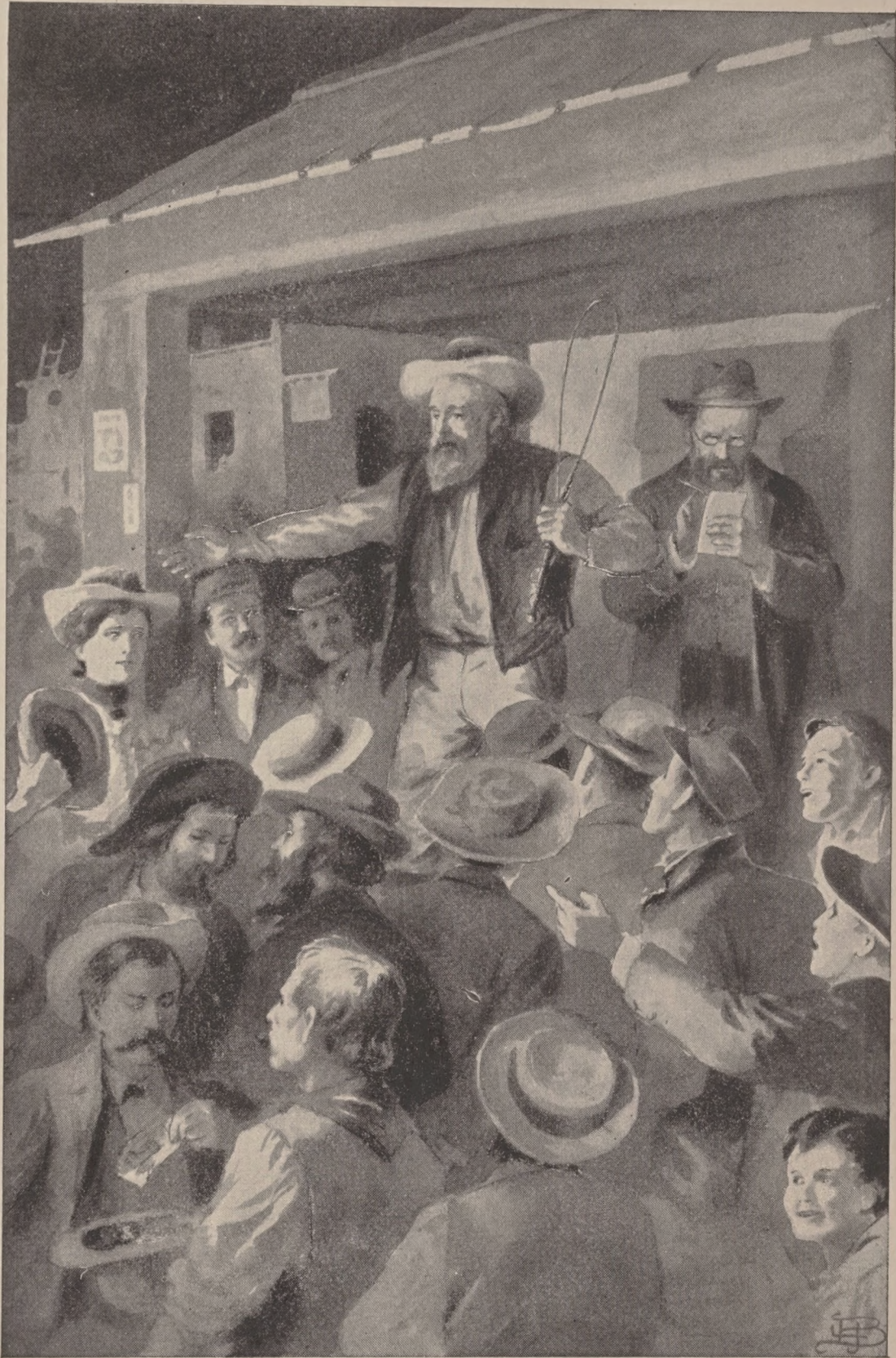
also to the occasion. He pushed through the crowd, abruptly, and got upon a high platform in front of one of the stores. In the midst of the roar of fire and human lungs, he began to shout a speech, saying he did not intend to do so, but pluck was pluck. He was burnt out once himself, and had a tornado tear him down another time. And these young people was bound to make it go; they had the rattle-snake-killin' grit into 'em, and who'd stand by to give them another start? He called the attention of the banker, and begged to say he had a couple of thousand acres of as good land as any man in the counties around, and them boys and that girl was to be stocked up for a fresh start, if it took every acre of it. He said he was excited, but he meant it.

When people understood what he was talking about, they began to consult among themselves. The banker leaped upon the platform. He was a man of few words, but remarked that the *Chronicle* was an institution of the town, and for his part he would not have it destroyed; he would head a paper at the bank in the

morning. Mr. Bonebrake shouted to him to head it now; and the banker took out his notebook and did so, Israel Bonebrake adding his name and his hundreds with an eager hand. Somebody called out that a new man had come, well heeled to start another paper; but the popular voice replied:

“Throw him in the fire!”

Other well-to-do citizens sprang upon the platform, and put their names and contributions upon the paper. There was a crowd raging to contribute. The public-spirited enthusiasm was so great that cheer after cheer for the *Chronicle* arose, while the fire which had destroyed its outward presence among them was sinking. The editor, Pink Bradshaw, was called upon for a speech, and lifted to the platform. He had but one boot on, but, brimming to the lips with such appreciation of his townspeople as made a maturer man of him, he spoke straight out of his poetic heart to the hearts bearing him up in calamity, and made what they pronounced a “rattling good talk.” Then his brother was put up beside him; and Israel

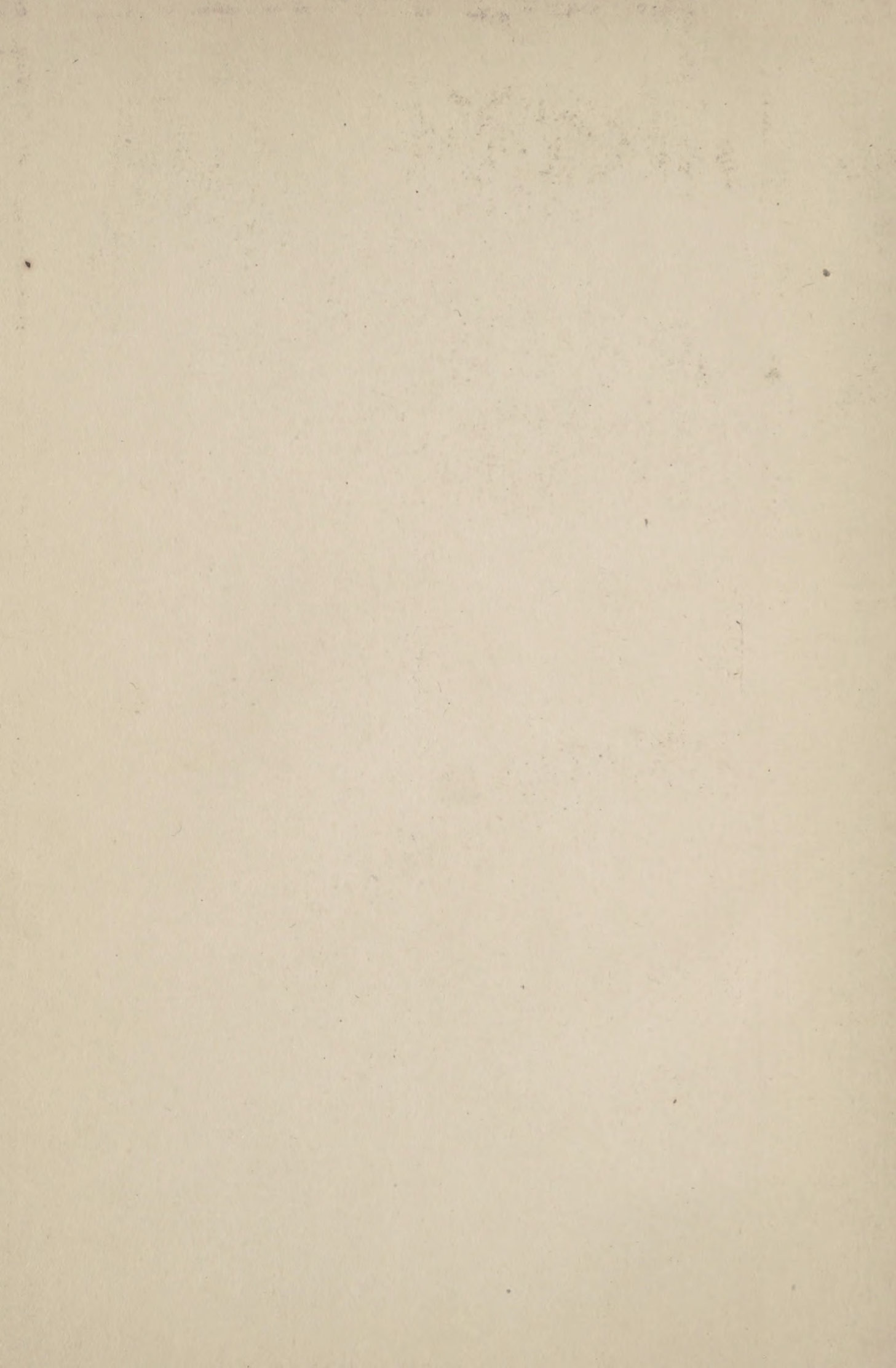


"OTHER WELL-TO-DO CITIZENS SPRANG UPON THE PLATFORM."

Bonebrake shouted for the sister, who, to avoid good-natured violence, slipped up behind the boys, put her hands on their shoulders, and looked from the background between their heads,—a trio of representative young Americans.

“There they stand,” shouted Mr. Bonebrake, “as peart and gritty as any bunch of yearlin’s I ever see, and here we’ll stand by them. They’ve got to have a good office and one o’ them big, fine printin’-presses. They’ll be a credit to this town, for these here boys are as full of go-ahead as a perrara-hen is of tricks. And their sister, she’ll always —”

“Assist,” said India.



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